

### [Importance of Open Space](#)

## **Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan Update ~ 2004-2008 Statement of Purpose Action Plan**

### **O** [pen Space and Recreation Goals](#)

### [Open Space Map and Key](#)

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There is strong sentiment among Bedford residents that a small town atmosphere should be maintained by preserving the Town's scenic and historic places, and preservation of open space has become a planning priority. As open land continues to disappear, the Town's character and history are threatened. The preservation of agricultural and woodland resources, historic sites and structures, and other remaining open spaces should be pursued, both as a reminder of Bedford's history and earlier character and for protection of natural, historic and scenic resources.

A Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan Update for the years 2004-2008 now serves as the Town's current model for open space and recreation planning. This plan received preliminary approval from the Division of Conservation Services, allowing the Town to secure major funding for several conservation land purchases. The document includes a section on progress made since the development of previous plans, the results of a new survey, maps based on the new Town Geographic Information System (GIS), and a 5-year action plan. Although the plan should again be updated, the goals, supporting objectives and action items remain as relevant guidelines for the Town.

### **Draft Bedford Open Space and Recreation Plan Update ~ 2004-2008 Plan Summary The**

*Open Space and Recreation Plan Update, 2004-2008*

is intended to serve as a report on the accomplishments of the

*Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1997-2002*

, an outline of current open space and recreation issues, and a guideline for continued natural resource protection, recreation improvements and preservation of community character.

The 1997 Plan Summary includes the following description of the Town's landscape aspect and open space and recreation challenges:

*Bedford is fortunate to have a variety of open space and natural areas within its borders, including the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, the Concord and Shawsheen River systems and other local conservation areas, that provide the residents with an opportunity to enjoy its natural attributes. In order to maintain the community character highly valued by its residents, Bedford must pursue acquisition or long-term protection of remaining open lands which contribute to natural resource, recreational, scenic and historic interests.*

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*The demand for open space and recreational opportunities continues to grow in Bedford and has become a carrying capacity issue.*

The Town continues to develop and grow, and the continuing accuracy of this statement is qualified by the characteristics of recent land use changes. Because current development pressure is more severe, and proposed use increasingly dense, the open space and recreation benefits gained from past major residential proposals are seldom a significant part of the present planning process.

Highway expansions and changes in commercial development and use are beginning to erode originally designed buffers and landscaped areas.

The unprotected open space perceived as part of the community landscape character is now more susceptible to infill development, demolition accompanied by larger reconstruction, and increasing paved surfaces.

Notwithstanding these current trends, the successful implementation of many aspects of the 1997-2002 Action Plan demonstrates that Bedford has pursued and completed actions consistent with this brief description of the town's open space and recreation values. The 2004-2008 Action Plan has been developed to extend this effort, with emphasis on preservation

of community character, landscape, natural and historic resources, expansion of protected contiguous landscapes, and acquisition of lands that can provide both open space and recreation opportunities.

### Statement of Purpose

The first *Open Space and Recreation Master Plan* was completed by the Bedford Conservation Commission in 1977. This document included the first detailed contemporary assessment of Bedford's landscape and natural resources, original, hand-drawn maps, diagrams and illustrations, and an ambitious Action Plan. It was followed in 1986 by an Update that reported on changes in the Town, accomplishments in open space preservation and recreation, descriptions of conservation and recreation areas and a revised Action Plan.

In 1997 the Commission produced the *Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1997-2002*, based on the 1990 State guidelines and requirements for such plans.

Since 20 years had passed since the first Plan, the 1997 document included a great deal of information that reflected the current community character and natural resource base, as well as a detailed Action Plan and new mapping.

The Action Plan was based on a Town-wide survey, and was developed by a committee made up of representatives from most Town boards and committees.

This Update to the previous plans should be read as a chapter in the history of the Town's value of its natural resources, historic past, community character, varied landscape and the well-being

of its residents. In particular, the information included in the previous plans is integral to the understanding of this Update. There is perhaps no better guide to Bedford's geology, surficial landscape and river systems than the 1977 Plan.

The 1997 Plan reflects the interrelationships between Town and State agencies that, in recent years, have consolidated open space and recreation goals and facilitated their attainment.

Both Plans and Updates seek to provide accurate information on the hundreds of acres of conservation land and recreation areas that the Town has fortunately acquired.

The descriptions, conclusions and patterns of action developed since 1977 indicate clearly that the Town will face the same challenges in preserving its community identity and natural resources that have been evident for at least the last 20 years. New pressures, methods of development and funding opportunities make the challenges more complex, the failures to protect more damaging, and the preservation successes more critical and rewarding.

The Town's success in meeting many goals and objectives, and completing their action items, is clearly read in the progress narratives of 1986 and 1997.

It is hoped that the 2004 Update will guide the Town in continuing to meet the open space and recreation needs of its residents.

The 2004 Update highlights the many steps the Town has taken to ensure that community needs are identified and met, and continues to recommend specific actions to achieve evolving goals and objectives from 2004 through 2008.

## Open Space and Recreation Plan Goals

**Goal 1** Preserve the small town New England character of Bedford.

**Goal 2** Protect valuable water resources, aquifer recharge areas and unique wildlife habitat areas .

**Goal 3** Enhance the potential of the Town's existing open space and conservation resources .

**Goal 4** Preserve and protect historic and cultural properties and sites.

**Goal 5** Preserve large tracts of undeveloped lands.

**Goal 6** Develop and improve a network of trails, sidewalks and bikepaths between neighborhoods, public facilities, conservation and recreation lands and commercial areas .

**Goal 7** Enhance the quality and variety of recreational opportunities, both passive and active, for all age groups and abilities in the Town of Bedford .

A detailed series of objectives and action items was developed to achieve these goals, and many of the action items have been completed.